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ABSTRACT

This paper provides background information about the geography, language, culture, and political history of the Micronesian region, noting that Hawaii's public schools are experiencing an increase in the enrollment of children from Micronesia. Micronesia includes the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the three Freely Associated States (FAS), which include the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau; and the Territory of Guam. The Republics of Kiribati and Nauru are also geographically included in Micronesia. Residents of the FAS can enter, reside, and seek employment in the United States without a visa or green card. Many immigrants from the FAS are seeking better educational opportunities, health care, and job opportunities. Educational challenges facing FAS students include limited English language skills, lack of familiarity with school system expectations, and cultural mismatches. Schools and teachers can help alleviate this situation by honoring, understanding, and appreciating diversity, communicating openly with families, seeking translation assistance, and setting high expectations for all students. The paper concludes with answers to 19 questions that teachers frequently ask about educating children from the FAS. (Contains 18 references.) (SM)

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Culturally Responsive Schools for Micronesian Immigrant Students

By Hilda C. Heine*

Introduction

Hawai'i's public schools are experiencing an increase in the enrollment of students from Micronesia. The latest data from the Hawai'i Department of Education's (HIDOE's) English for Second Language Learners (ESLL) Program show that 13% of the state's total English as a Second Language (ESL) student population, or 1,671 students, come from the Freely Associated States (FAS): the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM – Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Republic of Palau (ROP). They represent a region that is not well known but that is vastly diverse linguistically, culturally, and geographically.

This briefing paper provides background information about the geography, language, culture, and political history of the Micronesian region. Extensive information on the FAS is given in order to put into context the migration of the FAS people to the U.S. and its island territories. The paper closes with a focus on educational challenges facing Micronesian students from the FAS states and offers suggestions for teachers and other educators who work with them. A section of frequently asked questions begins on page 10.

Geographic Location

The term "Micronesia" is often confusing because it has geographic, cultural, and political definitions. Geographically, Micronesia includes the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

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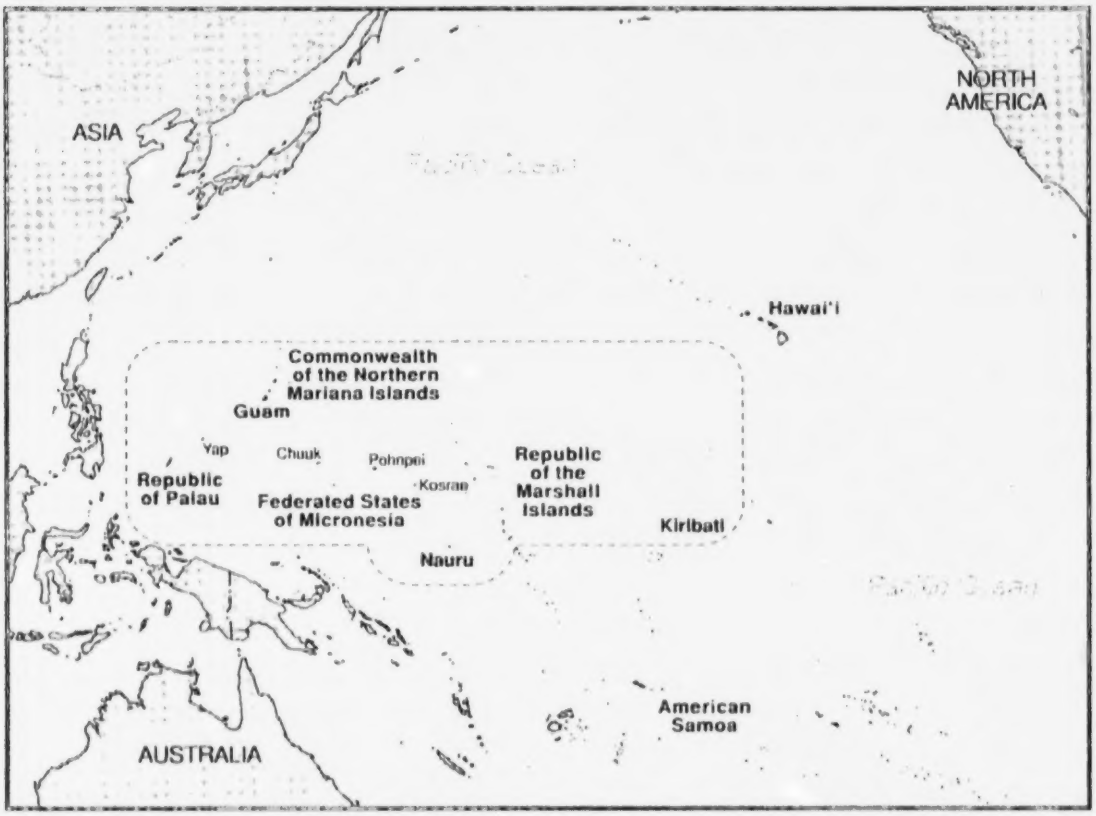
(CNMI), the three FAS (FSM, RMI, and ROP), and the Territory of Guam. As shown in Figure 1, the Republics of Kiribati and Nauru, both former British colonies, are also geographically included in Micronesia.

Figure 1.
Map of Oceania



Micronesia is made up of thousands of high volcanic islands and low-lying atolls. The geographic region currently comprises 7 distinct political entities, about 17 dominant ethnic and cultural groups, and at least 20 languages and numerous dialects as shown in Table 1. The commonly used term "Micronesians" came into popular use after the Compacts of Free Association were signed in 1986 and 1994. However, the people from this region are geographically, ethnically, and culturally diverse. It is more appropriate to refer to them by their ethnic and cultural groups.

Historical and Social Context

After World War II, the current political entities now known as CNMI, FSM, RMI, and ROP became a United Nations strategic trust, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), under the stewardship of the U.S. With the proviso that the islands would eventually achieve self-determination, the U.S. was obligated to prepare these entities for self-government. After close to 40 years as a "strategic trust," a new chapter in the history of the region began as each island group sought and attained separate political status. The Northern Mariana Islands became CNMI, while FSM, RMI, and ROP entered into Compacts of Free Association with the U.S. The signing of the Compacts was heralded

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Table 1. Island Area, Political Status, Ethnicity and Cultural Groups, Languages Spoken, and Population in Micronesia

Island Area	Political Status	Ethnicity and Cultural Groups	Languages Spoken	Population
CNMI	Commonwealth in political union with the U.S.	Chamorro and Carolinian	Chamorro and Carolinian	74,612** (est. July 2001)
FSM: • Chuuk • Kosrae • Pohnpei • Yap	Constitutional government in free association with the U.S.	**Chuuk:** Chuukese, Mortlokese, and Puluwatese **Kosrae:** Kosraean **Pohnpei:** Pohnpeian, Pinglapese, Nukuoro, Kapingimarangese, and Mokilese **Yap:** Yapese, Ulithian, and Woleaian	**Chuuk:** Chuukese, Mortlokese, and Pulwatese **Kosrae:** Kosraean **Pohnpei:** Pohnpeian, Kapingimarangese, Mokilese, Pinglapese, Ngatikese, Nukuoro, and Mortlokese **Yap:** Yapese, Ulithian, Woleaian, Satawalese, and Pulwatese	107,008* (est. 2000) Chuuk: 53,595 Kosrae: 7,686 Pohnpei: 34,486 Yap: 11,241
Guam	Unincorporated territory of the U.S.	Chamorro	Chamorro	157,557** (est. July 2001)
Republic of Kiribati	Independent	Kiribati	Ikiribati	94,149** (est. July 2001)
RMI	Constitutional government in free association with the U.S.	Marshallese	Marshallese	50,840 *** (est. 1999)
Republic of Nauru	Independent	Nauruan	Nauruan	12,088** (est. July 2001)
ROP	Constitutional government in free association with the U.S.	Palauan	Palauan	19,092** (est. July 2001)

Sources: * From *Information on the Federated States of Micronesia: People*, by the FSM Mission to the United Nations, 2002. ** From *The World Factbook 2001*, by the Central Intelligence Agency, 2002. *** From *1999 Census of Population and Housing*, by the RMI Office of Planning and Statistics, 1999.

as opening a "new and rather unique chapter in Pacific Islander migration" (Rubinstein, 1991). Whereas earlier immigrants from the FAS were mostly students and military personnel, the Compacts allowed, for the first time, unlimited immigration of FAS residents to live and work in any U.S. territory or state.

The total population count for each of the FAS entities is relatively small. *The World Factbook 2001* (Central Intelligence Agency, 2002) reported a total of 19,092 Palauans, with approximately 3,000 living abroad, primarily on Guam. The 2000 census (FSM Office of Planning and Statistics, 2000) listed 107,008 citizens living in FSM and about 15,000 living abroad, primarily in Guam, CNMI, and Hawai'i. The 1999 census (RMI Office of Planning and Statistics, 1999) listed 50,840 Marshallese in RMI, with an additional 5,000 to 8,000 living primarily in Hawai'i and selected continental U.S.

states such as Arkansas, Oregon, California, Texas, and Oklahoma. The current trend in the FSM migration pattern is a movement from Guam toward Hawai'i and the continental U.S.

While progress is evident in certain areas (see Table 2), improvements have been difficult to achieve in others. For example, though the FAS citizens' population growth rate from 1988 to 1999 has slowed, unemployment rates have gone up in two of the three entities. Population compositions still consist of nearly 50% who are below 15 years of age. Migration to nearby U.S. states and territories is an individual family effort to remedy harsh economic realities at home. The search for better educational opportunities for the growing number of school-aged children and employment opportunities for families starting out is likely to be a continuing challenge for the FAS.

Table 2. Selected FAS Indicators, 1988 and 1999

Statistical Indicators	FSM		RMI		ROP	
	1988	1999	1988	1999	1988	1999
Population growth rate	3.0%	1.9%	4.2%	1.5%	2.6%	2.1%
Median age	16	18.9	14	17.8	28.1	30.8
Percentage of population under 15 years	49.0%	46.0%	51.0%	42.9%	30.2%	25.5%
Fertility rate (births per woman 15-49 years)	4.6	4.7	7.2	5.7	3.4	2.8
Unemployment rate	13.5%	16.2%	12.5%	31.0%*	7.0%	2.3%
Average annual income	$5,664	$6,367	$5,700	$6,840	$8,882	$7,687

*Includes subsistent farmers, fishermen, and craftspeople.

Sources: From *1999 Census of Population and Housing*, by the RMI Office of Planning and Statistics, 1999; *Information on the Federated States of Micronesia: People*, by the FSM Mission to the United Nations, 2002; *Republic of Palau Economic Report*, by the Bank of Hawai'i, 2000; *The World Factbook 2001*, by the Central Intelligence Agency, 2002; *1990 Census of Population and Housing*, by the ROP Office of Planning and Statistics, 1990; *1994 FSM Census of Population and Housing*, by the FSM Office of Planning and Statistics, 1996.

Why FAS People Migrate to the U.S.

The term "Freely Associated States" is a label given by the U.S. to the three independent countries with ties to the U.S. under Compacts of Free Association. FSM and RMI each entered into a 15-year Compact of Free Association with the U.S. in 1986 (1986-2001). Currently, the two entities are undergoing negotiation with the U.S. to renew economic provisions of their Compacts, looking at a possible 20-year term. ROP entered into its own 15-year Compact with the U.S. in 1994 (1994-2009) and is only midway through its current term. Each Compact is an international treaty approved by the U.S. Congress that spells out the rights and obligations of the U.S. and each respective nation. The Compact with each of the politically independent nations contains economic, political, and strategic provisions that were born out of shared historical experiences and mutually beneficial strategic alliances.

A provision in the Compacts for visa-free entry into the U.S. and work eligibility is an integral part of the agreements and accounts for the recent increase in immigrants from the FAS regions. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service classifies citizens of the FAS as "eligible non-citizens." The FAS citizens – Marshallese, Micronesians, and Palauans – can enter, reside, and seek employment in the U.S. without visa requirements or green card status.

Like those before them, immigrants from the FAS are seeking better educational opportunities, health care, and job opportunities. The countries they leave behind are "underdeveloped" in the sense that they are still in the early stages of economic development, with developing educational and health care systems. With an economic base consisting of fisheries, light manufacturing, small-scale tourism, and, for RMI, military land leases, job opportunities are very limited. As shown in Table 2, economic conditions, particularly in FSM and RMI, have gotten worse in the past decade. Unemployment rates have risen in these entities, and increases in annual income have not kept up with the generally high costs of living in the region. Hence, many of those who migrate to the U.S. do so for economic reasons.

Educational Challenges Facing FAS Students in Hawai'i and Beyond

In recent years, the number of immigrants from the FAS nations to Hawai'i, particularly families with school-aged children, has increased significantly. Corresponding increases in public school enrollment, as illustrated in Table 3, have also been documented. The numbers show a 43% increase of FAS students in Hawai'i schools between 1997 and May 2002. For teachers and school administrators in Hawai'i and elsewhere with high concentrations of FAS students, this influx brings with it new challenges – unfamiliar languages, different value systems, and new cultures. Challenges faced by children from the FAS region are attributed to poor English language abilities, lack of familiarity with school system expectations, and a mismatch between their culture and the schools' culture. To the degree that these challenges can be positively alleviated, achievement levels will improve for these students.

Table 3. FAS Students in Hawai'i Public Schools, 1997 and 2001

Entity	1997	2001
FSM	515	585
RMI	630	1,070
ROP	47	16
TOTAL	**1,192**	**1,671**

Source: From *Hawai'i's Limited English Proficient (LEP) Student Population*, by the Hawai'i Department of Education, 2002; *Micronesian Migrants: Who They Are and Where They Are Going*, by M. J. Levin, 1997.

English language skills. While English is taught in all FAS schools, students come from homes where at least one indigenous language is used predominantly. English is often a second or third language. Consequently, FAS students' English language abilities are frequently below grade level, necessitating placement in the state ESLL programs.

In school year (SY) 2001-2002, 13% of the 12,524 ESL student population, or 1,671 students, were from the FAS region. The concentration was found in the Honolulu and Central school districts, now known as complexes. According to the HIDOE (2002), the FAS ESL student population included 1,070 Marshallese, 342 Chuukese, 118 Kosraeans, 100 Pohnpeians, 25 Yapese, and 16 Palauans. FAS students not placed in the ESLL program were not included in this count.

In SY 2000-2001, the Honolulu school district/complex enrolled the largest number of students from the FAS: 377 from RMI, 520 from FSM, and 9 from ROP. Of these students, 30% were considered non-English proficient; 65%, limited English proficient, which means students have limited English speaking ability but are struggling to attain the academic language proficiency necessary to succeed in school; and 5%, fully English proficient. The Honolulu school district/complex data also show

that 83% of FAS students received free or reduced lunch; 28% were not in age-appropriate grade levels, a higher percentage than that of the remaining student population; 38% were failing one or more core content courses; and 9% were enrolled in special education (Hawai'i Department of Education, 2001).

Several reasons account for the low level of English competency among FAS students. Many correlational studies (Cummins, 1984; Hakuta, 1987) examining relative proficiencies in the languages of bilingual children have shown that home language proficiency is a strong predictor of second language development. According to Gibson (1980), bilingual efforts in Micronesia did not yield substantial results because of a lack of full use of the children's native language abilities in school, a practice still predominant today. The policy and practice in most FAS school systems call for use of the home language as the medium of instruction from 1st to 3rd grade. While policy dictates teaching of the first language in these grades, in practice language teaching may be focused on English, depending on the availability of language teaching materials and the comfort level of the classroom teacher. The use of English is gradually introduced in the 4th grade and becomes the predominant language of instruction in high school. This practice has done little to help with proficiency in either language.

Furthermore, although development of bilingual materials and teacher training in bilingual education methods started in the 1980s, what exists today is insufficient and policies enforcing bilingual education still receive limited attention. For more than 20 years, FAS children have been attending "bilingual" schools, but the development of cognitive academic language proficiency in the mother tongues has been largely ignored. Much of language learning and teaching continues to focus on teaching English at the expense of the mother tongue. This leads to students who are cognitively proficient in neither language.

Familiarity with school system expectations. Many families come to the U.S. with inadequate understanding of community and classroom expectations and other procedural requirements of the American school systems. For example, while compulsory education to age 14 is often the case in the FAS, the laws are not strictly enforced and daily school attendance is not given much attention. Students and parents are often surprised to learn that in Hawai'i and the continental U.S., school attendance is taken seriously and can even warrant the involvement of law enforcement agencies in extreme cases.

Instructional approaches are also new and different in the U.S. Where students may be expected to problem solve and make decisions independently in any American classroom, island students may be reluctant at first to step outside of normal family practices in which problem solving and decision making are shared. In many cases, some of the values that were supported and encouraged in island schools no longer apply in the U.S. For example, "borrowing" from a friend without asking permission is an acceptable practice for most people growing up in the FAS; it is not acceptable in American schools, and students often get into trouble for doing so. School staff who may not have the cultural understanding and sensitivity often view these differences as "deficiencies." Consequently, the children appear to them to be "unprepared," "uninterested," and "unmotivated."

Cultural mismatch. FAS students bring family values and priorities, views toward schooling, and social orientations that are different from those found in the host communities. It is often a surprise to many of these students that the cultural repertoire of skills and attitudes that worked for them back home do not work in their new homes. For example, FAS students are taught to be quiet in the presence of an adult. Students find that this practice does not hold true in Hawai'i and continental U.S. schools. Sharing and keeping the interest of the group over the individual are values that are not consistent with the individualistic and competitive values encouraged in American schools. For fami-

lies and students, ample time should be allowed for the acculturation process to take its course. Newcomers need time to learn different behaviors and expectations in their new environment.

Unlike immigrant groups from complex and more industrialized countries, many of the FAS immigrant students come from small "developing" island communities in which community belonging and sharing is still key in how family and community members care for and interact with one another. Stepping into cultural contexts where individual interest is sometimes the primary concern can create conflict and frustrations on both sides. Priorities are also different. For example, in the FAS time is still relative, and strict commitment to schedules and appointments is not highly valued.

Suggestions for Schools and Teachers

As many and real as they are, the challenges facing FAS students are not insurmountable. Honoring and appreciating diversity is an excellent first step. Parents must be involved if children are to be successful. Open, regular, and sincere communication and information-sharing with parents are essential to building trusting relationships and providing knowledge about school expectations, policies, and requirements. Separate parent orientation programs, including translation assistance, should be a component of the school's overall program of community building. Ideally, several sessions would be necessary to discuss school expectations, policies, and a cultural orientation overview about the host community.

Schools may seek translation assistance from each of the island nation liaison offices. Their contact information can be found in the Hawai'i state telephone directories. Other social service agencies, such as the Catholic Charities or Women's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands, and non-governmental organizations, such as the Small Island Networks and Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), can usually offer assistance or translator contact information. Community churches are other possible sources of translation assistance.

Building culturally responsive schools includes having sensitive and tolerant teachers and students who understand the new immigrant groups. At the classroom level, teachers and mainstream students must get to know the new students and appreciate the assets they bring to school. Despite cultural and linguistic differences, the FAS students trust and appreciate peers and adult role models, particularly those who respect and treat them fairly.

Setting high expectations is just as critical; however, instruction should build from where students are. Language difficulties should not be a reason to expect less from these students or to isolate them from the rest of the school population. A flexible classroom environment that is able to accommodate academic, linguistic, and cultural differences is an ideal classroom. It is important to remember that FAS children are no different from children of any other cultural or linguistic group in terms of physical and emotional needs. U.S. public school systems have welcomed all immigrants in the past. The FAS students should be afforded the same welcome.

Strategies that have worked with other ESL students will likely be as effective with FAS students. In *Standards-Based Instruction for English Language Learners*, Laturnau (2001) offers examples of specific instructional accommodations or modifications (see Table 4) that have proven effective with ESL students, including providing instruction and materials in the students' native languages; demonstrating activities and strategies through teacher "think alouds" and modeling; setting language, content, and learning strategies; adjusting speech; utilizing cooperative learning methods; and teaching coping strategies.

Table 4. Instructional Accommodations for English Language Learners (ELLs)

Instructional Accommodations for ELLs	Rationale
Provide native language instruction and materials.	The strategic use of the students' native language to focus on the development of higher order thinking skills and on the clarification and elaboration of key concepts and vocabulary has great potential for accelerating and enhancing ELLs' access to mainstream curricula. Additionally, when ELLs' native language is valued and utilized, they are more likely to have increased self-esteem and greater self-efficacy. Access to materials written in their native language supports ELLs' literacy and cognitive development (Hakuta, 2001).
Provide "think alouds" and modeling.	ELLs benefit when teachers explain strategies and steps for tackling instructional tasks, check for student understanding before students start the task independently, and present numerous examples of concepts being taught (Gersten, Baker, and Marks, 1998).
Set language, content, and learning strategy objectives.	Chamot and O'Malley (1994) contend that content should be the primary focus of instruction, academic language skills can be developed as the need for them arises from the content, and ELLs can learn and apply learning strategies to a variety of contexts if those strategies are explicitly taught.
Tap students' prior knowledge.	Instruction that values and continues to cultivate the educational and personal experiences ELLs bring to the classroom, rather than ignores or tries to replace these experiences, enables students to make meaningful connections with what is being taught (Cummins, 1994).
Use visuals/ manipulatives.	Concrete examples and experiences give ELLs a variety of ways of understanding the information being presented.
Teach key vocabulary.	Traditional instructional processes aimed at improving vocabulary acquisition in which students are given word lists to look up in the dictionary, followed by practice in a definition or synonym exercise, and then tested, do not work well with ELLs (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996). Teachers need to utilize a variety of approaches and strategies (e.g., graphic organizers) to help ELLs gain a deep understanding of abstract concepts.
Adjust speech.	The Center for Applied Linguistics (1998) suggests 11 ways teachers can adjust their speech to increase comprehensibility: face the students; pause frequently; paraphrase often; clearly indicate the most important ideas and vocabulary through intonation or writing on the blackboard; avoid "asides"; avoid or clarify pronouns; use shorter sentences; use subject-verb-object word order; increase wait time for students to answer; focus on student's meaning, not grammar; and avoid interpreting on a regular basis.
Utilize cooperative learning methods.	Cooperative learning is a key instructional strategy for ELLs because it enhances interactions among students, promotes the development of positive academic and social support systems for ELLs, prepares students for increasingly interactive workplaces, and allows teachers to manage large classes of students with diverse needs (Holt, 1993).
Teach coping strategies.	ELLs may not have the confidence or facility in English to ask for help or clarification. They may also come from cultures where it is inappropriate to directly ask a teacher for help.

Source: From *Standards-Based Instruction for English Language Learners*, by J. Latumau, 2001. Available at www.prel.org/products/pc_/standards-based.pdf or www.prel.org/products/pc_/standards-based.htm

Cultural Variables Impacting Adjustment

Understanding Micronesian students' orientation, which influences their values, beliefs, perspectives, priorities, and behavior, may ease their adjustments into the U.S., as well as assist in extending meaningful services that meet their unique needs. Teachers are encouraged to review the Teacher's Guide to Cultural Variables (see Table 5) for more insight into the range of cultural variables that may be found in their diverse classrooms. This guide is a helpful tool that can be used to better understand

Micronesian students. Teachers will find that students' educational experiences, home culture, value systems, and other factors in their upbringing can influence where they fall on the spectrum.

Classroom teachers can discuss this table as a group and offer analyses of how it can be applied in their diverse classrooms. Teachers are cautioned against making generalizations that may not necessarily apply to all members of a single cultural group. To be effective, it is important that educators learn to know their students as individuals with varied needs, strengths, and weaknesses.

Table 5. Teacher's Guide to Cultural Variables

Cultural Variable	Range	
Participatory structures	Whole group ⟷	Small group or Pairs
	Competitive ⟷	Non-competitive
Decision making process	Individual ⟷	Collective
Concept of time	Linear (concrete) ⟷	Circular (abstract)
Task completion	Task orientation ⟷	Process orientation
Leadership roles	Democratic ⟷	Autocratic
Roles of participants	Active ⟷	Passive
Knowledge acquisition	Theoretical ⟷	Experiential
Gender roles	Non-prescriptive ⟷	Prescriptive
Individual expression	Vocal ⟷	Reserved
	Non-conforming ⟷	Conforming
Mode of interaction	Direct ⟷	Indirect
Protocol	Informal ⟷	Formal
Recognition of excellence	Overt praise ⟷	Private acknowledgement
	Singled out ⟷	Group-oriented
Modes of learning	Theoretical ⟷	Practical
	Inquiry-based ⟷	Didactic

Source: From "Culture and the Classroom: Comparing Teachers' and Students' Cultural Variables," by L. van Broekhuizen, 2002.

Conclusion

There are likely to be additional questions after reading this briefing paper. The Pacific Service Region section of the PREL website (www.prel.org/pacserv/pacserv.asp) provides information about the schools and school systems in the FAS region and links to websites of island governments. PREL also has indigenous educators who can provide first-hand information about the school systems and challenges facing students. Organizations such as the Small Island Networks assist in bringing Marshallese tutors to certain Honolulu elementary and middle schools. Other resources are available in libraries, such as those at the University of Hawai'i and other universities, and through consulates and liaison offices in Honolulu for each of the respective island governments.

Frequently Asked Questions From Teachers

As a way to answer the most frequently asked questions regarding Micronesian students in Hawai'i schools, PREL has developed a website (www.prel.org/teams/) that provides links to multicultural education resources and cultural profiles of the Pacific island entities from which students come. We encourage educators to log on to this website to access information and use the email link to ask questions of PREL experts. This website is a work in progress, so we suggest accessing it periodically for updates.

The following are some of these frequently asked questions and responses to provide further insight into the Micronesian student. A word of caution: In order not to take these responses out of context, teachers are encouraged to read additional resource documents for a broader and deeper understanding of the FAS and its various cultures.

1. ***How is education viewed in the FAS?***
   Education is viewed as a means to an end. Families encourage their children to go to school in order to have good jobs and a better livelihood in the future. Like elsewhere, the value of education and the range of family involvement and support provided to children are dependent on many factors. These include socioeconomic status and schooling level of parents, as well as the context of the community where the school is located (urban center or outer islands).

   Families do make sacrifices for the education of their children. Some of these sacrifices are initially made in the best interests of the children but may not turn out that way in the long run. For example, it is not uncommon for families to send their children away to relatives who live in urban centers as far away as Hawai'i or the continental U.S. to attend what parents perceive as good schools. Although there are different perspectives on the value of this practice, it is clear that the sacrifice for the family, particularly the children, is a great one. This is one measure of how families value education.

2. ***How is the English language taught in the FAS?***
   English is taught for an hour daily beginning in the 1st grade and continuing through high school. Most teachers are not trained ESL teachers, so strategies used vary according to skill levels. Often classroom arrangements and strategies are still very traditional, so rote learning and recitation of facts are common. Teaching English is also hampered by a lack of curriculum materials, particularly in outer island schools. In the public school systems, students are taught to read and write in English but have very limited opportunity to practice speaking it.

3. ***What is the language of instruction in FAS schools?***
   In most Micronesian schools, the local language is used as the medium of instruction in grades 1 to 3, sometimes 4, in all subject areas except English. English is usually mandated as the language of instruction from grade 4 or 5, with the exception of local language classes. In reality, however, most teachers are not comfortable using English in the upper elementary grades so end up using the local language as the medium of instruction.

4. ***How can teachers encourage greater class participation?***
   The dominant cultural practice is for children to listen and keep silent until spoken to by an adult. This, plus the insecurity of speaking a new and difficult language, makes children from the islands especially reserved and quiet in class. Teachers need to be particularly patient, creative, and willing to devote effort and time to gradually draw out the student. In many cases, establishing a trusting relationship with a teacher is what it takes to get students to open up in class.

5. ***What are some effective ways teachers can communicate with students?***
Before academics, schooling for many of these children will initially focus on successfully navigating their way around and figuring out how things are done in their new homes. "Culture shock" will impact behaviors such as communicating properly with teachers and peers, understanding classroom setup and norms, becoming familiar with types of food served in the school cafeteria, knowing the proper clothes to wear, and adjusting to rules of the playground. Teachers should expect and allow time for the acculturation process to occur. They also need to be patient and understand that children are feeling insecure in many ways. Helpful strategies to break down the communication barrier may include the following:

- Set aside time to talk with the student on a one-to-one level, so the student can become more familiar with you and feel less fearful.
- Attempt to understand the dynamics of the child's home.
- Ask classmates and friends to help translate for the student.
- Communicate to the student in writing. This is helpful if the student is a newcomer to the states and is having trouble speaking out loud.
- Set up tutorial assistance for students.

Respect for authority is taught to children when they are very young. This includes not talking when in the presence of an adult or someone in authority. Because the teacher is seen as an authority figure, most students are quiet in the classroom. Students are self-conscious about their English speaking abilities. They are particularly self-conscious in the presence of other students from the islands, which is another major reason for lack of participation in classrooms.

6. ***What teaching techniques or strategies work best with Micronesian students?***
Using small cooperative groups with rotating roles and partners so the student can get to know everyone in the class is an effective strategy. Include the newcomer in activities instead of giving options (the student may never choose to participate, even if he or she wants to), and assign responsibilities, starting with small and easy duties and gradually increasing the difficulty level. Written feedback on the student's papers is highly recommended as one way of establishing a dialogue between the student and the teacher. Private praise, not done in front of others, is also encouraged. Overall, patience and perseverance are required.

7. ***What are some strategies to improve student motivation?***
Belief in the student is critical. Find out why the student is not motivated, and work from there. Just getting to know the student better and establishing a good relationship can help.

8. ***How can teachers address sensitive health issues, such as head lice?***
Parents (usually mothers) are the ones responsible for health care in the Micronesian family. Setting up a parent orientation every year to discuss such issues can be very helpful. Public health officials can be invited to attend and share information on health-related issues, such as head lice, with translations provided.

Different perspectives, often culturally based, need to be understood by teachers and school officials, as well as parents. Some health issues may not be seen in the same way by parents coming from a different culture. These may also need to be dealt with from both education and economic viewpoints. People who understand the issue of head lice may not have the economic means to purchase cleaning solutions on a regular basis. If the family must prioritize its resources, head lice solution may not be at the top of the list. However, it needs to be communicated to parents that these are some of the expectations schools have in order to allow children to participate in the school system.

9. ***How do families discipline their children?***
Traditionally, children are part of an extended family who shares the responsibility of raising them. Any member of this family, which includes grandparents, parents, uncles, and aunts, can discipline the child either verbally or physically, including corporal punishment. In today's transitional cultures, the links among members of the extended family are often weakened, and the parents/guardians are the sole disciplinarians of their children. However, the common methods of discipline (talking, spanking, or a combination of both) are still the same.

10. ***What are traditional roles of mothers and fathers?***
Traditionally, the father is the provider and disciplinarian. The mother is the comforter and the glue that holds the family together. Modern families have working mothers, which means women are becoming family providers as well as disciplinarians. The women defer to the men in certain family decisions. However, raising children, managing the home, cooking, cleaning, budgeting, and getting children prepared for school are roles for which mothers are expected to take the lead responsibility.

11. ***Why do Micronesian students have a difficult time following class rules?***
Because their language capabilities vary, Micronesian students may not realize what the class rules are or really understand why they are important. Micronesian schools have rules too, but they are likely more flexible and better explained. An orientation with a translator present would be the best way to educate parents and children about school rules, classroom rules, school policies, and why they are important. Many of the students' parents have not completed high school and have a limited understanding of school rules or their role in the education of their children.

In many parts of Micronesia, schools were (and still are) modeled after American institutions with American teachers. These methods were very foreign to traditional educators, so parents felt uncomfortable in a place where they were unfamiliar with the ideas, methods, and language taught. Over decades, this effectively alienated parents and the larger community from being involved in education. Those attitudes, beliefs, and feelings still hold true today. Even as Micronesian parents recognize the value of an American education, they do not really understand how it works or how they can help. Many parents consider education to be the sole responsibility of the authorities and experts – the teachers – rather than a joint effort. In short, when schools work with parents to ensure they understand school expectations of them, parents can work with schools to assist in communicating these expectations to their children. Making sure the children demonstrate an understanding of the rules is the first step in ensuring that they will follow them.

12. ***What is the FAS school system like? Is there a difference between the school systems of RMI, FSM, and ROP?***
Most of the school systems were only begun in the late 1940s and were modeled after U.S. schools with U.S. curricula and textbooks – the content of which is generally irrelevant to the lives of the students. These schools teach in the indigenous language until 3rd or 4th grade and then are supposed to switch to English through 12th grade. Unfortunately, this does not happen often, since many Micronesian teachers, with only a high school education, may not be comfortable speaking English and may find it necessary to use the native language to explain foreign concepts represented in American textbooks. The transition from first to second language takes place too quickly, and children are not given adequate time to acquire cognitive academic language proficiency in the first language. Therefore, they have difficulty acquiring a second language.

These are some of the reasons children come ill-prepared to take on more rigorous academic work. Other issues in their educational system include unsafe and overcrowded school buildings,

which can lead to limited instructional time. In crowded urban centers, students have school in shifts to accommodate the large number of students and the few schools. In outer islands, often more than one grade level occupies a single classroom since there are few qualified teachers, populations are smaller, and resources have to be shared.

There are no particular differences among FSM, RMI, and ROP schools. They share the same roots (U.S. Trust Territory). Differences that might exist may have to do with resource availability to the school systems and educational levels of school personnel.

13. Why do Micronesian students have poor attendance?

Attendance is highly valued by Americans. In most parts of Micronesia, family relationships or obligations take priority over other things, including wage labor jobs. Flexibility to respond to immediate pressures such as bad weather, illness, a death in the family, and babysitting is more valued than consistent attendance. Keeping social relationships harmonious – helping out when necessary or when expected – is more important than personal goals or commitments (e.g., job, school), since in the long run people expect to count on their family and friends more than their jobs or education. These values translate into less of a commitment to regular attendance on the parents' part, and subsequently on the students' part. Since parents have little experience with U.S. educational systems, they do not realize the implications and consequences of letting their children stay home. Therefore, schools need to educate parents and families about the importance of regular attendance so that higher value can be placed on it. Also, when students are struggling in school, face difficult language barriers, or are frequently punished or criticized, they are less likely to want to go to school.

14. How can educators help Micronesian students overcome the language barrier? How can teachers communicate with them?

In schools with concentrations of Marshallese, Chuukese, or other FAS students, there must be an accessible translator. Schools have to make an effort to meet with parents and students with a translator present in order to be sure that they understand what is expected of them, why it is important, and who they can go to if they have questions, problems, or concerns about their children's experience. There has to be an avenue for support or an advocate, so they know that they can be heard and understood. Micronesian students are cooperative learners and with the right encouragement are helpful tutors and teachers for one another. Perhaps a student with higher English skills can help students with more difficulties and can also translate a bit for the teacher. Students are shy because of their language difficulties as well as the value placed on being polite and respectful toward authority. In some cases, students are frustrated and mischievous; in others, they are withdrawn and shy. Each student is different, and like any other student in the classroom, the teacher should take the initiative to get to know each student's strengths and weaknesses.

One very effective means of communicating with students is through dialogue-type journals, or teachers' comments on papers and tests, that show the teacher cares. It takes a long time to develop rapport and trust, and this is one private, comfortable way for the students to learn that their teachers care about them.

15. Do Micronesian students have problems concerning family life?

Micronesian students are like any other immigrant student population. As individuals and as a group, they are learning the values – both good and bad – of their host nation and trying to work their way through unfamiliar systems as best they can.

Micronesian immigrants in general tend to be on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, and they tend to have many people living in a single home. This is the norm back in the islands, and it becomes more of a necessity in the expensive state of Hawai'i or other states. Since extended families are the norm and children are raised by aunts and uncles as much as by parents, it is often the case that a single set of adults might have five or more students living with them. This is a strain on families, particularly those in which parents are not accustomed to being the sole sources of authority or childrearing. In the islands, children are accorded more freedom than in the U.S., since there are more people and relatives around to watch over them. In the U.S., the challenges of being the sole person responsible for numerous children – particularly teens – means consequences for people unaccustomed to such responsibilities, particularly in a more complicated environment, where the options of activities for children are so much greater than in Micronesia.

It is important to understand that these children are going through difficult adjustment processes – linguistically and socially as well as the typical pre-adolescent and adolescent developmental stages – and that their families, while they provide an anchor for them, are also adjusting. The social marginalization of Micronesians in Hawai'i and other states also makes the adjustment process difficult, and this only reinforces the likelihood that Micronesian students and families will cling to one another and be less likely to assimilate. The more open, understanding, and encouraging teachers and schools can be toward these families, the better off the students and schools will be in the long run. These students are not likely to succeed unless they feel accepted and respected, even if they do not fit the expectations of their classrooms, schools, and larger communities.

16. ***Why do some Micronesian students not do homework?***
There are numerous reasons why this happens, many of which apply to all students in general. These reasons include family lives, church involvement, limited support from parents or other relatives, having no one to assist them with homework, not fully understanding the importance of doing homework, exposure to peers who do not do it, not wanting to look like show-offs in front of other Micronesian students, difficult assignments, being afraid to ask for help or clarification, and being tired of school and its struggles by the time they get home. Any number of these factors can impact a student's desire and ability to do homework. Teachers should ask students what they did the previous night instead of their homework and then work out a system to reward them for doing it.

17. ***What behaviors are accepted in Micronesia that are not accepted in the U.S. (e.g., spitting)? How can we help students understand what is culturally appropriate in the U.S.?***
Such instances are the stuff of cultural miscommunication and cultural learning. They can be opportunities for both sides to learn about each other. When something "inappropriate" occurs, the student needs to be taken aside and informed in a respectful and non-judgmental way that the behavior, while perfectly fine where they come from, is not accepted in the U.S. and that people will judge them negatively for doing it. In some cases, perfectly acceptable behavior back home is punishable in U.S. schools, and the student will have to learn to follow these new cultural norms to keep out of trouble and fit in better. For example, while "borrowing" someone's pencil or book without asking permission may be acceptable back home, asking first before using is an expected norm in Hawai'i and continental U.S. schools.

It is extremely important that these behaviors are addressed in a way that does not make students ashamed of normal parts of their own culture. If the cause for concern deals with hygiene or sanitation, explain that the norms outside of Micronesia are different. Students should never feel

embarrassed about their culture's customs, and a school that offers this type of respect for its students is more likely to see them succeed.

Also, regular meetings with parents, students, and a translator can provide opportunities to share information about expected behaviors and can be done very respectfully. The translator may also offer insight into the behaviors and why they might be appropriate or even necessary in the islands, even if not acceptable in the U.S.

18. ***How can teachers be more effective in helping Micronesian students succeed?***
As with any other students, Micronesian students who know they are accepted and who realize that their teachers care about them as individuals, no matter their strengths or weaknesses, will perform better. With steady encouragement and private praise (on paper or in person), the students will respond. Perhaps taking a little extra time to check comprehension with those students either individually or as a group after school would go a long way. Making a commitment to them, even if they are slow at first to respond, will make a difference. Also, since the students are generally quiet, teachers are unsure of their impact. Whether the students appear to improve or not, persistent teachers will make a lifetime of difference in students' lives. Patience and determination are the best ways to work with Micronesian students. It is critical to learn about their culture and understand that they come to school with lots of knowledge and experience that they are unable to share, that is not valued, or is just never known by their teachers. Of equal importance is working with parents and families and helping them to understand the school system's expectations of them.

19. ***Should Micronesian students take more language classes?***
While giving intensive language instructions may initially help put the child on solid footing in the academic setting, it should not override a focus on other academic subjects. Removing the students from mainstream classes to focus on language only hurts them eventually. The "special" treatment can have a negative connotation; additionally, being with peers who are ESLs themselves does not help the child in the long run.

Language learning should build on language skills students already have. In some cases, it may mean integrating first language use and content in lessons. Sometimes students may need tutors and translators and lots of encouragement for tiny successes. There is no one right answer to language challenges teachers face in schools. It is important, however, not to refer children to special education simply because of English language difficulties.

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